

Veterans History Project: Highlights from 2004

Collection doubles in size

2004 was a banner year for the Veterans History Project! Veterans History Project (VHP) experienced rapid growth in the number of collections submitted to the Library of Congress. From January to December 2004, the collection *more than doubled in size* from 12,000 veterans' stories to **nearly 25,000 individual personal recollections**. VHP is the largest collection of its kind the United States. Our Web site [www.loc.gov/vets] continues to be a resource for people interested in participating as well as researchers, students of history, and writers. Last year VHP launched a fully searchable database and its Web site features more than 1,000 fully digitized stories.

VHP continues to work with Members of Congress. We are pleased to have participation from all 50 states. *Our thanks to the thousands of VHP volunteers -- for without your support we could not continue to serve those who served us.*

Key Accomplishments in 2004

For **Memorial Day 2004**, VHP was invited by the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage and the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) to participate in a four-day celebration that was held on the National Mall. The **National World War II Reunion** coincided with ABMC's dedication of the National World War II Memorial on Saturday, May 29. Over the Memorial Day weekend, VHP collected nearly 3,000 veterans' stories and received extensive national and local press coverage including *CBS Evening News*, NPR's *All Things Considered*, *CNN*, *Associated Press*, *Washington Post*, and *Los Angeles Times*.

The **second radio special**, *Lest We Forget*, in the series "Experiencing War," aired on more than 130 **Public Radio International** stations around the country on Memorial Day.

For last Veterans Day, VHP published with National Geographic its **first book**, *Voices of War*, based on some of the stories in our collection. A book party was held in the Library's Great Hall on November 8 and Senators Chuck Hagel and John Warner attended. The event was covered by a number of journalists including C-SPAN's Book TV.

VHP partnered with New York City's **American Place Theatre** to produce a 45-minute theatrical presentation on a story from the collection. Part of the "Literature to Life" program, it will be toured to high schools around the country.

The **VHP exhibit**, "From the Home Front and the Front Lines," in the Library's American Treasures was featured from Memorial Day through Veterans Day. If you missed it, you can still view the virtual exhibit at www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures.

Hot Off the Press

If you haven't already, placed your order for the new VHP brochure and one-page "how to" flyer [free of charge], email vohp@loc.gov. Here you can also request Field and Memoir kits. Other items for purchase include purple **VHP t-shirts and caps** worn by VHP volunteers during the National World War II Reunion. To purchase items, go to www.loc.gov/shop.

Inside VHP

Diane Kresh, a Library of Congress employee with nearly 30 years of service, was appointed as the new permanent director in May. Thanks to a generous contribution from the Library's Madison Council, the Project benefited from the hard work of eight college students during the summer. The interns were responsible for cataloguing more than 150 collections per week, plus a windfall of 3,000 stories collected over the Memorial Day weekend. In 2004, the staff grew to 28 full-time staff, contractors, and interns.

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Veterans History Project: Plans for 2005

The Veterans History Project is off and running in 2005! The Veterans History Project (VHP) continues to develop some of the key programs started in 2004 and we find new ways to engage veterans, families of veterans, and the public in this extraordinary volunteer effort to record America's history. We need your help to build on last year's accomplishments, so please continue to keep us informed of your programs.

Upcoming Events & Programs

Please join us or represent VHP at your various conferences, meetings and reunions. Should you like to have a Veterans History Project representative attend an event, please contact our office.

- The Veterans History Project is working with the US Coast Guard Auxiliary to collect veterans' stories during the **Department of Defense's World War II 60th Anniversary Commemoration** events around the country. [February 19 in Tampa; March 12 in San Antonio; other cities include San Diego, Boston, Chicago]
- On March 16 –19, VHP will attend the **Annual National Service Learning Conference** in Long Beach, CA.
- On April 28 – 30, VHP will present during a panel at the **Midwest Archives Conference** in Chicago.
- On April 13, VHP director Diane Kresh will be the keynote speaker at the **University of Toledo** for an exhibit opening titled, "Ideals, Courage & Hope: The Experience of Soldiers in America's War." The program is coordinated by the **Truman Presidential Museum & Library**.
- May will be another big month for the Project. Please check our Web site for details on various programs to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War as well as the 60th anniversary of WWII.
- On May 26 – 29, VHP will collect stories from former POWs during the **Red River Valley Association / NamPOW Reunion** in Washington, DC. We are coordinating with Everett Alvarez, VHP Five Star Council member.
- On June 13 – 19, VHP will attend **Operation Homecoming USA: America's Tribute to Vietnam Veterans** in Branson, MO.
- On September 24, the Library of Congress will host, with First Lady Laura Bush, the **National Book Festival**. VHP's new book (see below) will be available for sale.
- On October 22 –23, VHP will attend the WV Book Festival coordinated by the **South Charleston Public Library**.
- VHP will also attend the **American Folklore Society** and the **Oral History Association** annual meetings.

More in 05

- **National Geographic Books** will publish the second book on the Veterans History Project on Veterans Day 2005. Fifty veterans will be featured on the theme of "life-altering" moments.
- New initiatives to gather the stories of veterans working in federal agencies and living in retirement communities are being developed.
- Other new partnerships include programs with **Members of Congress, Harvard Law School, the Liz Lerman Dance Exchange, LYNX** transit system of Orlando, FL, **Public Radio International**, the **Department of Veterans Affairs**, the **Association for the Study of African American Life and History**, and more...

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